

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

Listing of Claims

1-22. (Canceled).

23. (New) An image coding apparatus comprising:

a coder that performs image coding processing for an image on a per macroblock basis;

a macroblock counter that counts the number of macroblocks that are image coding processed in the coder for a transmission unit;

a bit counter that, with respect to a transmission unit that is generated using a plurality of macroblocks coded in the coder, counts the amount of codes included in the transmission unit;

a significance decider that determines an average amount of codes per macroblock in the transmission unit, from the counted number of macroblocks in the transmission unit and the counted amount of codes in the transmission unit, and determines an image decoding significance of the transmission unit, as it would be perceived at a destination of the transmission unit, according to the determined average amount of codes per macroblock; and

a significance assigner that assigns significance information representing the determined image decoding significance to the transmission unit for inclusion therein.

24. (New) The image coding apparatus of claim 23, wherein the significance decider comprises:

an average code amount calculator that divides the counted amount of codes included in the transmission unit by the counted number of macroblocks in the transmission unit to determine the average amount of codes per macroblock in the transmission unit;

a threshold calculator that calculates a threshold from a frame rate and a bit rate of the transmission unit; and

a threshold comparator that outputs, when the determined average amount of codes per macroblock exceeds the calculated threshold, the significance information for use by the significance assigner and in determining whether to store the transmission unit for a prospective retransmission.

25. (New) An image distribution server comprising the image coding apparatus of claim 23.

26. (New) A base station apparatus comprising the image coding apparatus of claim 23.

27. (New) An image coding method comprising:

dividing a digital image into macroblocks and performing coding processing on a per macroblock basis;

counting the number of macroblocks that are coding processed for a transmission unit;

counting, with respect to a transmission unit that is generated using a plurality of the coded macroblocks, the amount of codes included in the transmission unit;

determining an average amount of codes per coded macroblock in the transmission unit from the counted number of macroblocks in the transmission unit and the counted amount of codes in the transmission unit;

determining an image decoding significance of the transmission unit, as it would be perceived at a destination of the transmission unit, according to the determined average amount of codes per coded macroblock; and

assigning significance information representing the image decoding significance to the transmission unit for inclusion therein.

28. (New) A computer readable recording medium that stores an image coding program, said program comprising the operations of:

dividing a digital image into macroblocks and performing coding processing for the image on a per macroblock basis;

generating a transmission unit using a plurality of the coded macroblocks;

counting the number of macroblocks in the transmission unit;

counting the amount of codes included in the transmission unit;

determining an average amount of codes per macroblock in the transmission unit from the counted number of macroblocks and the counted amount of codes in the transmission unit;

determining an image decoding significance of the transmission unit, as it would be perceived at a destination of the transmission unit, according to the determined average amount of codes per macroblock; and

assigning significance information representing the determined image decoding significance to the transmission unit for inclusion therein.

29. (New) An image coding apparatus comprising the recording medium of claim 28.

30. (New) The image coding method of claim 27, wherein the determination of the image decoding significance comprises:

dividing the counted amount of codes included in the transmission unit by the counted number of macroblocks in the transmission unit to determine the average amount of codes per macroblock;

calculating a threshold from a frame rate and a bit rate of the transmission unit; and

outputting, when the determined average amount of codes per macroblock exceeds the calculated threshold, the significance information for use in assigning the information to the transmission unit and determining whether to store the transmission unit for a prospective retransmission.

31. (New) The recording medium of claim 28, the determination of the image decoding significance comprises:

dividing the counted amount of codes included in the transmission unit by the counted number of macroblocks in the transmission unit to determine the average amount of codes per macroblock;

calculating a threshold from a frame rate and a bit rate of the transmission unit; and

outputting, when the determined average amount of codes per macroblock exceeds the calculated threshold, the significance information for use in assigning the information to the

transmission unit and determining whether to store the
transmission unit for a prospective retransmission.